

822

H182p

THE POSTSCRIPT,

A NEW AND ORIGINAL COMEDY,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

F. HAMILTON-KNIGHT.

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TO THE ORIGINAL CAST,
 THIS PLAY
 IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED
 BY THE AUTHOR.

*First Produced at the Prince of Wales' Theatre,
 February 14th, 1888.*

CHARACTERS.

Col. Sir Clive Cutler, Bart., V.C.... MR. BRANDON THOMAS.
 Marjorie Fleming (*his Ward*)..... MISS ROSE NORREYS.
 Mrs. Treherne MISS FANNY ENSON.
 Harold Treherne (*her Stepson*)..... MR. LEWIS WALLER.

(By kind permission of their respective Managers.)

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SAMUEL FRENCH, 89, Strand, London.

THE POSTSCRIPT.

SCENE.—Garden of MRS. TREHERNE'S house in Jersey. House piece with French window and steps, R. Fence at back of stage with gate L. C. Table L. C. with writing materials, paint brushes, and palette, workbox, &c., on. Chairs R. and L. of table. Garden seat down R.

TIME—THE PRESENT.

HAR. (*discovered at table sketching*) Ah me! Another morning wasted in a fruitless endeavour to realise the ideal. Here have I been for the last three hours trying to do justice to the prettiest face on the island—lucky accident that was, the means of introducing me to such a girl, and yet perhaps unlucky. How will it all end? I've never been able to summon up courage to declare my love, dreading a possible refusal. She must have seen that I am devoted to her, and if she does not care for me she surely would have shown it in her manner. She lets me call her Marjorie, at least sometimes, and has given me her photograph—here it is. (*taking it from pocket*) Just as though any arrangement in plain black-and-white could do justice to such a face as hers. No, it wants the utmost skill of the artist, and all the cunning of his palette, to pourtray such speaking eyes and eloquent features as she possesses. I have tried, like King Bruce's spider, "again and again," but have not yet, like that highly industrious and morally instructive insect, succeeded in my endeavours. At all events I have honestly earned the midday bottle of Bass, so here goes for it. (*Exit into house, R.*)

Enter SIR CLIVE CUTLER *at gate, L. C.*

SIR C. I wonder if they can assist me here. No one about. The whole place seems to be deserted. A mile and a half indeed! why I must have been describing a circle. However, I won't proceed further without consulting the Native Intelligence department, so I call a halt here and wait till someone turns up. (*sits*) What a pretty place! (*looking at work-basket*) A lady's, evidently. It's wonderful in how many hundred little ways a woman makes her presence felt. She gives, as it were, the finishing touches to the civilisation of life. She turns a desert into a garden, a garden into a Paradise. I don't suppose Adam thought much of

Eden till Madam Eve put in an appearance, and yet when she did—(HAROLD *sings without*) Ah ! somebody at last.

HAROLD, *singing* : “ The gentlemen fine they may drink up their wine, I always sticks to my beer I do,” *enters from house, R., with bottle of Bass, glass and corkscrew.*

SIR C. (*coming forward*) I must apologise for intruding, but I wish to be directed to St. Elmo.

HAR. With pleasure. Do you know St. Peter’s Church ?

SIR C. No. I arrived only this morning. I may say I have come straight from Bombay *viâ* Southampton last night. I’m an utter stranger to the island.

HAR. Indeed ! Pretty place, isn’t it ? I like it awfully. (*drawing cork*) Pardon my refreshing myself, but I’m dying of thirst. Will you join me ?

SIR C. Thank you, no. Being an old Indian, I unfortunately, have a liver.

HAR. Ah, it’s bad for livers, but for the man whose constitution has not been ruined by climate, curry and cayenne, it’s the one great and only beverage. (*drinking*) They certainly acknowledge the fact now-a-days, by making brewers peers, but if I’d my way I’d have created the man who invented it a prince, and erected a monument to his memory.

SIR C. I see, you’re an enthusiast on the subject.

HAR. Rather. I intend writing an Horatian ode in its praise some day.

SIR C. (*aside*) This young gentleman amuses me. (*aloud*) Don’t you approve of champagne ?

HAR. Champagne ! Bah ! Drink for women and wedding parties !

SIR C. Brandy and soda, then ?

HAR. B. and S.—yes, that lifts you up for the moment, and then throws you down like, like—like——

SIR C. A piece of orange-peel ?

HAR. Exactly. Brandy’s the bow, man the arrow. The higher he’s shot up, the farther he has to fall.

SIR C. Your simile is apt, sir ; and pray what opinion have you arrived at concerning port wine ?

HAR. In its usual form of logwood it’s poison ; in its pure state, taken in sufficient quantities, it’s an infallible recipe for grog blossoms and gout. No, sir ; believe me, that the finest drink in the world, which is both grateful and comforting, is——

SIR C. Epps’s cocoa ?

HAR. No, sir. Bass’s beer, and I give him the advertisement for nothing. The sun never sets on the British dominions, and the little red triangle (*pointing to bottle*) is

always there to gladden his gaze whenever he shines upon the Union Jack.

SIR C. May I ask if you are always as enthusiastic in your likes and dislikes?

HAR. Yes, I don't believe in half measures. At school if I liked a fellow he shared my tuck with me, if I didn't I had a fight with him.

SIR C. Ah! that's what I like to see in youngsters. Enthusiasm and poverty have made our greatest men.

HAR. Well, I hope if ever I achieve greatness it will be by the fire of enthusiasm, not through the spur of necessity. I hate gush, but I do like good honest appreciation. For instance, I'm devoted to this out-of-the-way little island of ours.

SIR C. Jersey. So I gather from your remarks. What is it celebrated for?

HAR. Oh, nothing in particular, I believe—pears, potatoes, cabbages, and cattle.

SIR C. And beauties, I am led to understand.

HAR. Oh, I don't know about that. The prettiest girl in these parts comes from Scotland.

SIR C. (*who has moved up to back of table, takes up MARJORIE'S picture*) And may I ask, without taking a liberty, if this is the counterfeit presentment of the young lady in question? (*putting on glasses; aside*) What an extraordinary resemblance, and the name, too—"Marjorie." (*aloud*) Is this sketch real or ideal?

HAR. Well, as the original is my own perfect idea of beauty, it's ideal; but as I've tried to reproduce her features as they are, it's real. You know it's not half pretty enough for her.

SIR C. (*smiling*) At all events I think it a very charming face.

HAR. Well, without being vain, I flatter myself it's rather better than this. (*showing photograph*)

SIR C. (*aside*) Majorie Fleming! I guessed as much. (*returning photograph*) Thank you, sir. (*looks at picture again*) Is this from life?

HAR. No, from memory.

SIR C. Indeed! The young lady must have made a great impression on your susceptibility.

HAR. I should think she has; why I'm over head and ears in love with her.

SIR C. And has she formed an equally high opinion of you, may I ask?

HAR. I don't know. I've never had the courage to ask her, but I shall soon, to-day, perhaps.

SIR C. Then I apprehend you've not known the young lady long?

HAR. No, not long. I had the good fortune to be of some slight service to her on one occasion, and so got to know her. The little mother called on her, and we became firm friends.

SIR C. Fortune evidently favours you. I hope the acquaintance has proved a pleasant one. But while I am listening to your eloquent dissertation on beauty and——

HAR. Beer—Oh, I don't mind. I always own my faults.

SIR C. And Beer, I'm not getting any nearer my destination, so if you'll allow me I will say good morning.

(going towards gate)

HAR. If you'll wait a moment while I get my cigar case I will walk up the road with you and put you on your way.

SIR C. Thank you. You are very kind.

(HAROLD exits into house, R.)

SIR C. *(sits at table)* So Marjorie's pretty face has played sad havoc in that young heart. Poor boy, if his feelings are as deep as his expressions of devotion it will be a terrible disappointment to him. But wait a minute, my dear Clive, wait a minute. Has it occurred to you that Marjorie may have formed a strong liking for this young gentleman? She has not seen me for two years, no letters of hers have reached me for more than three months, and that's a long time in a young girl's life. I've often wondered if I did right two years ago in asking her to be my wife. I am her guardian, she had no one else to look to, still I've had my misgivings. "Crabbed age and youth cannot live together." No, hang it, I hardly think that applies to me, although——
(pauses, reflects) Ah! Kate, Kate, it's nearly twenty years since I parted from you, as I thought, broken-hearted, and yet I've never ceased to think of you. *(rises)* If we could but know the troubles that are in store for us, life would indeed become intolerable.

HAROLD enters from house, R.

HAR. Now, sir, I'm at your service.

SIR C. I'm exceedingly obliged. I shall hope to see you again during my stay here.

HAR. I hope so, too; then we can continue our discussion on Beauty, Beer, and—have a cigar?—Tobacco.

Exeunt at gate, L.C., laughing. MRS. TREHERNE *calls from house, R.,* Harold, Harold. *(comes down steps)* Harold, dear. Why, he's not here. I'm sure I heard him in the house a moment ago.

Enter MARJORIE FLEMING from house, R.

MAR. What, has he gone?

MRS. T. Oh, he'll be back soon, depend upon it. You'll stay to lunch with us?

MAR. I shall be very pleased. Meanwhile, if I may, I'll go on with this work for you.

MRS. T. As you like, dear. I must go and visit some of my old people. Let me see, to-day is my day for old Jacobs.

MAR. What, that terrible old man, with only one eye, which he uses to glare at you with, whilst he drones forth his interminable grumblings.

MRS. T. Well, the poor old soul hasn't much to make him happy.

MAR. I'm sure he might be more gracious to you for all your kindness to him.

MRS. T. I do very little, my dear, but in his rough way he appreciates it. He grunts like a bear, it's true, but I prefer his honest grumblings to profuse gratitude, which always seems so suggestive of a keen sense of favours to come.

MAR. I'm afraid I should cease to try to do good if I thought my efforts were so little appreciated.

MRS. T. My dear Marjorie, if one regulated one's kindness according to the gratitude one receives, charity would have died long ago. True charity, my dear, is a love of humanity, not a love of thanks.

HAROLD *sings without* "Oh, there's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream."

MRS. T. Ah, here comes some one who will keep you company till I return.

Enter HAROLD at gate, L.C.

HAR. Ah, Miss Fleming, how do you do? I thought you had quite deserted us.

MAR. Why, I was here only the day before yesterday.

HAR. Were you, really? It seems quite an age to me; doesn't it to you?

MAR. (*laughing*) What an odd question!

HAR. Yes, I know. I didn't mean that. I'm always saying something stupid.

MRS. T. Harold dear, I am just going down the hill. Marjorie is going to stay to lunch. You must entertain her till I return.

HAR. What! Is Lady Bountiful going on her errands of mercy again? Upon my word, you ought to have lived in the Middle Ages and been a saint.

MRS. T. (*going to gate*) You silly boy! I fear I don't do nearly as much as I ought, and, as for being a saint of the Middle Ages, I'd far sooner be a middle-aged saint of the

present day. There's much more opportunity of doing good if we only take the trouble to seek it out. Well, till lunch, adieu.

Exits at gate, L.C. MARJORIE sits R. of table and works.

HAROLD potters about nervously at back.

HAR. Miss Fleming !

MAR. Yes.

HAR. It's an awful jolly day, isn't it?

MAR. Dear me ! so it is. The originality of your remark quite startled me.

HAR. Ah ! now you're beginning to chaff me, as usual. The little mother said I was to entertain you.

MAR. And you couldn't hit upon anything better than the usual society small talk. You must have a very poor opinion of my mental capabilities.

HAR. I couldn't have a poor opinion of anything connected with you. But you know a fellow can't open fire with his big guns at first, there must be a little skirmishing beforehand

MAR. Some people never get beyond the skirmishing.

HAR. That's because they're afraid to fire their big guns.

MAR. Why ?

HAR. For fear they might recoil upon them, and crush them.

MAR. You talk, Mr. Treherne, as though I were your enemy, glowering at you from behind fortifications.

HAR. I wish you were.

MAR. Indeed !

HAR. Yes, for in that case I'd lay siege to you at once.

MAR. I'm sure you'd very soon give up in despair.

HAR. Not a bit of it. "Never say die while there's a shot in the locker." (*aside*) By Jove, I'll summon up all my courage and open fire at once. (*aloud*) Marjorie ! I may call you Marjorie, mayn't I ?

MAR. Eh ?

HAR. Well the *mater* calls you so, and Miss Fleming sounds so horribly formal. I may call you Marjorie, mayn't I ?

MAR. Of course you may, Mr. Treherne.

HAR. Why, that's almost as bad as "Miss Fleming." Won't you call me Harold—simple Harold ?

(MARJORIE laughs at him)

HAR. No, no, I don't mean that, but just Harold.

MAR. Well, then, "Just Harold." If it hadn't been for "Just Harold's" bravery, there would have been no Marjorie to call.

HAR. I wish you wouldn't always be talking of the

accident that introduced us. I have been more than rewarded.

MAR. How can I help talking of it when you saved my life at the risk of your own?

HAR. I wish I could risk my life every day of the week to serve you, Marjorie, I'd—

MAR. I require no further proof of your heroism. Another experience like that would kill me.

HAR. (*walking about nervously*) What an idiot I am! I'm as timid as a hare. (*sits down on seat, and hesitates before speaking*) Oh! by the way, my friend Vane has arrived on the island.

MAR. Has he? That will be very nice for you. You have often told me that you and he are such old cronies.

HAR. We were at Oxford, but I've changed my views now.

MAR. How's that?

HAR. Well, you see we both of us swore to live and die old bachelors, and I've changed my mind.

MAR. You're not the first man who's done that.

HAR. Perhaps not, but it's very few fellows that have such a good cause for changing their minds as I have. Do you think so?

MAR. I don't understand you.

HAR. (*aside*) Ah! There are none so blind as those who won't see. (*aloud*) I received a letter from Vane this morning. He has arrived here in his new yacht, "The Albatross." The little mother and I are going to see it this afternoon. He intends to go for a cruise round the world, and wants me to accompany him.

MAR. That would take a very long time, wouldn't it?

HAR. He intends to be away about eighteen months.

MAR. (*rising*) But you're not going, are you?

HAR. (*aside*) I believe she'd miss me. (*aloud*) I'm not certain yet. It doesn't rest with me entirely.

MAR. Of course not. Mrs. Treherne would miss you dreadfully, and so would—

HAR. (*anxiously*) Who?

MAR. Oh! I don't know. Why—why all your friends, of course.

HAR. Would you ever think of me while I was away?

MAR. Think of you! Why of course I should. I shall think of you as long as I live. Don't I owe my very life to you?

HAR. But for no other reason?

MAR. Yes, I shall always think of you as a very dear friend.

HAR. Couldn't you think of me in another way, Marjorie, couldn't you think of me as——

(MARJORIE breaks away and resumes work)

MAR. Now, you must not hinder me any more, Harold, I want to finish this work before Mrs. Treherne returns. How good and kind she is to all the people round about.

HAR. Yes, isn't she? If she were twenty times my mother I couldn't love her more than I do. I never saw my own mother, and my earliest recollections are associated with Mrs. Treherne's kindness to me. I have been emulating her this morning, and—(*mock heroically*)—have just put an old man's erring footsteps in the right path.

MAR. Why, you're joking, Harold.

HAR. Not a bit of it. When I came in I had just returned from my errand of mercy.

MAR. How did it happen?

HAR. I had just got my mid-day bottle of Bass——

MAR. Harold!

HAR. Only one, when I found a gentleman here who asked to be directed to St. Elmo.

MAR. St. Elmo. What was he like?

HAR. Well, not at all the sort of visitor to call on the Gorgon. I beg her pardon, Miss Whiffen. He was a tall, grey-haired, military looking man, and said he had only just arrived from India.

MAR. (*rising, agitated*) Sir Clive!

HAR. Why, what's the matter, Marjorie?

MAR. (*collecting herself*) Nothing, Harold. How silly you are. I felt a little faint. Will you fetch me a glass of water?

HAR. I won't be an instant. (*Exits into house, R.*)

MAR. (*sitting at table with a dazed expression*) Sir Clive returned! So ends my dream. What a wicked, ungrateful girl I am. I ought to be pleased to have him back, and yet how against my will have my feelings changed. Why have I put off telling Harold from day to day? I cannot help seeing that he loves me. (*goes towards house*) I'll tell him now. No, no, I cannot. I must go back at once, and then I can write and tell him what I should have told him months ago. (*going towards gate*)

HAR. (*enters*) Why where are you going, Marjorie?

MAR. I am going up to St. Elmo.

HAR. What, is your woman's curiosity already excited about this mysterious stranger?

MAR. Oh, no, no.

HAR. What is the matter, dear?

MAR. I'm better now.

HAR. But you promised to stay to lunch.

MAR. (*coming down*) I forgot, I forgot.

HAR. Marjorie, what's the matter? Won't you sit down? (*with intention*) I have something to say to you.

MAR. Not now, Harold, not now. Some other time.

HAR. I have put it off too long already. You must know that I love you.

MARJORIE *gives a cry.*

HAR. Have you not told me that you look upon me as a dear friend. Can't you look upon me as something dearer still, as your lover?

MAR. Oh, don't ask me, don't ask me. There can never be anything but friendship between us, Harold.

HAR. If you do not love me now, you may do so later on. Marjorie, at all events, tell me I may hope. If you do not you'll drive me to despair.

MAR. I cannot, I cannot! It is impossible.

HAR. Impossible! Why impossible? I implore you to tell me.

MAR. Oh, this is so painful to me!

HAR. If it *does* cause you pain, think what it causes me. At all events tell me that your heart is free. (MARJORIE *turns away half sobbing*) What motive can you have for being silent?

MAR. Can you not guess?

HAR. What? You don't mean to say that——

MAR. That I am already engaged? Yes, I am.

HAR. To whom?

MAR. What does it matter? My word is given.

HAR. I demand to know. I insist upon it.

MAR. (*with dignity*) By what right do you demand it? You forget yourself.

HAR. Yes, you are right, I did forget myself. I ask your pardon. They say no woman ever fails to see when a man is devoted to her, and I thought, fool that I was, that were such devotion not acceptable she would know how to discourage it. It seems that I am wrong, and that some women will smile upon a love they never mean to cherish. Marjorie, you have taught me a bitter lesson; I could not have believed you to be so heartless.

MAR. Were it not that I am indebted to your courage for my life, I would not answer you. I have never endeavoured to show to you any feeling beyond that of gratitude and esteem. When at length I could not fail to notice your feelings towards me were deeper than those of mere friendship, I meant to tell you of my engagement, but delayed doing so from day to day, because I—I hadn't the courage.

I am very, very sorry now that I did not do so, and so have saved you this unhappiness and myself your groundless reproaches.

HAR. My reproaches groundless? Can you deny that you have been content to see my deep love growing day by day, knowing that for me it must bear such bitter fruit? Ask yourself if what I say is true. How can I help but think that you have trifled with me all along?

MAR. (*with a great effort*) Oh, Harold, you will repent these bitter words; take them back, take them back before it is too late.

HAR. If I could take them back I would. It is easy for you to be sorry now. Why did you not think of this before? I have no right, I know, to question your actions, but I will tell you that if you desired to make a plaything of a man's heart you have had your wish, for love you I must in spite of myself. I congratulate you on your success, and I can only hope that the knowledge of what you have done may afford you as much pleasure as it gives me pain. Marjorie!

MAR. Harold!

HAR. Good-bye.

(*Exits at gate, L.C.*)

MAR. (*goes up to gate, sobbing*) Oh, Harold, Harold!

MRS. TREHERNE *enters at gate, goes up to* MARJORIE.

MRS. T. Why, Marjorie, my child, what is the matter?

MAR. Oh, Mrs. Treherne, I'm so unhappy!

MRS. T. Why, what has happened?

MAR. Harold has told me that he loves me.

MRS. T. Has that made you so unhappy, my dear?

MAR. But, Mrs. Treherne, I am engaged.

MRS. T. Engaged! Why, Marjorie, you never told me this.

MAR. I have been wrong, I know, but I have not deserved the bitter things he said to me.

MRS. T. You must not judge him, dear, by words, prompted doubtless by wounded love and pride. He told me that he cared for you, and I was glad, for though I know so little of you, I liked you from the moment we first met.

MAR. And I have loved you. In a few words I can tell you all. When I was a baby I lost my mother, and when I was ten years old my father was killed in action. I was left in the guardianship of a brother officer, and my aunt, my only relative, dying soon after, I was quite alone in the world. I was placed under the care of Miss Whiffen, and two years ago, when my guardian returned from abroad, he said that he could fulfil his duty best by making me his wife.

MRS. T. And your reply?

MAR. After deliberation I accepted him, and he was called away to the Afghan frontier. Since that fearful night when I was rescued from the fire by Harold and began to know you, my whole life has changed. I have learned that my feelings towards my guardian are those of an affectionate daughter, not of a wife.

MRS. T. Why did you not tell me this before, dear?

MAR. I have been wrong, I know. Oh, Mrs. Treherne, do advise me. What shall I do, what shall I do?

MRS. T. Your word is plighted, dear, and you must do your duty. Be sure the reward will come sooner or later.

MAR. It may come too late, and then one's life is one long regret. I know you feel for me, Mrs. Treherne, but you can never have known what it is to be as wretched as I am.

MRS. T. Why not, dear?

MAR. Because you are always so happy.

MRS. T. And do you think that because one does not parade one's woes before all the world that one has never known what sorrow is?

MAR. But you always seem to see only the bright side of life.

MRS. T. Perhaps it is because I have known the black, unhappy side of life so well that I now try to see only its brightness. Life is made up of shadow and sunshine, dear; but the clever artist, whose picture pleases you, knows how to make use of both alike. The shadows are there, you may be sure, but the high lights give the beauty to the whole.

MAR. And is that all the comfort you can give me?

MRS. T. Ah, Marjorie, you are like all the rest of the world. While you ask for guidance you are really begging for sympathy, and any advice that does not accord with your own ideas is sure to be thought unfriendly and unkind.

MAR. (*at table*) It is easy to philosophise when other people and not ourselves are concerned.

MRS. T. That is unjust, Marjorie.

MAR. (*coming down*) Forgive me, Mrs. Treherne.

MRS. T. I have told you that I feel for you deeply.

MAR. But you can never have been placed in the unhappy position I am.

MRS. T. I have been in your position, dear, for nearly twenty years.

MAR. What, you, Mrs. Treherne? Oh tell me. Sympathy with you may indeed give me strength to do—my duty.

MRS. T. No, dear, not now. Stay. Yes, I will. (*sits on seat, R.*) It may indeed encourage you. When I was a girl, younger than you are now, I loved one who, like your father, was a soldier, a young officer whose only misfortune was his

poverty. This, however, was a crime in the eyes of my father, a harsh, stern, man, who absolutely refused to sanction our engagement. He sent me away to Scotland, and when I returned my lover had been ordered to India on active service, whilst I was left alone to battle with my sorrow as I might. My father then endeavoured to force a union on me with his friend, Mr. Treherne. I refused absolutely, and for the next two years led a life of unspeakable misery. At the end of that time my father told me that unless I consented to marry the man of his choosing he would not allow so undutiful a child to remain under his roof, and still inflexible I decided to leave home, but my mother implored me to reconsider what I was about to do, telling me that my father's affairs were so involved that only my marriage with Mr. Treherne, a man of great wealth, could save him from ruin. For her sake I at last reluctantly consented. My life seemed ended then, but Mr. Treherne's devotion, and, above all, Harold's love, for I learned to regard him as my own child, gave me reason always to be thankful that I did my duty.

MAR. And Harold told me only just now how he loves *you*.

MRS. T. Ah, he is a dear boy, and it is for his sake as well as for yours that I am much distressed at what has happened.

MAR. Have you never seen or heard anything of ——

MRS. T. Of the man I loved—no.

MAR. But does he know that you are free?

MRS. T. I cannot tell, dear.

MAR. I'm sure that if he did——

MRS. T. You think he would have made some sign. Ah, Marjorie, you don't know human nature. "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart," and an apparently hopeless passion seldom lives in a man's breast for over eighteen years. I have no doubt he has forgotten that Kate Conroy ever existed. Yet how proud I felt when his name was gazetted for the Victoria Cross, the soldier's dearest prize. By-the-way, dear, you never told me what regiment your father was in.

MAR. The 15th Lancers.

MRS. T. What, not Colonel Fleming, of the 15th?

MAR. Yes, the same.

MRS. T. Who was wounded at Ghuznee, and rescued at fearful risk by a brother officer?

MAR. Yes, that officer is my guardian.

MRS. T. Your guardian! Then your future husband is——

MAR. Sir Clive Cutler.

MRS. T. (*extremely agitated; overcomes her emotion with an effort*) Clive Cutler!

MAR. He is here.

MRS. T. Here?

MAR. Yes, I knew he was returning from India, and he has, doubtless, intended this as a surprise for me. Harold told me only just now.

MRS. T. Clive Cutler here!

MAR. My dear Mrs. Treherne, you seem distressed. Do you know Sir Clive?

MRS. T. Know him? Yes, indeed. To try and comfort your grief I have told you all my story. The man I've loved for all these long sad years——

MAR. Is Sir Clive. Oh, Mrs. Treherne, this is terrible. What shall I do? My brain seems whirling round and round.

MRS. T. (*with irritation*) Go into my room, dear. Leave me alone. I will come to you presently. Only leave me alone.

MAR. (*goes to steps, pauses, comes back to MRS. TREHERNE*) Won't you kiss me, Mrs. Treherne?

MRS. T. (*very affectionately*) With all my heart, dear. With all my heart. (*Exit MARJORIE into house, R.*)

MRS. T. A moment ago 'I spoke lightly of Clive having forgotten me. I had schooled myself into the belief, not daring to hope otherwise. Yet now, the whole of my life seems to surge back to the moment I last parted from him. Now he is here again, but the gulf between us is as great as ever. And Harold, too, poor boy, poor boy! I should like to meet Clive once more, to grasp his hand and see his kindly face; and yet, for both our sakes 'tis better not, 'tis better not.

(*going towards house*)

Enter SIR CLIVE at gate.

SIR C. I'm sorry to trouble you, but——

MRS. T. (*turns*) Clive!

SIR C. Great heavens! Why——. Yes, it is Kate Conroy—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Treherne. (*shakes her hand*) Had the earth opened beneath my feet I should have been less surprised.

MRS. T. (*absently*) Yes, it is startling, isn't it, Sir Clive? By-the-bye, I must congratulate you on your succession to the title.

SIR C. Yes, all my old friends and relations have died off or married—much the same thing to an old bachelor. (*aside*) By Jove, she looks as charming as ever. (*aloud*) You'll never guess what brings me over here, Kate.

MRS. T. Indeed, I can. You have come over to see your ward, and wife that is to be.

SIR C. Oh, she has told you, has she? They informed me at St. Elmo that she had just called to see a friend at The Hermitage, and curiously enough I find this is the very place. I had a most entertaining interview here just now with a young gentleman—the painter of the picture.

MRS. T. My son, Harold.

SIR C. Your son—nonsense!

MRS. T. My step-son, I should say.

SIR C. A very nice young man. Where is he? and where is Miss Fleming?

MRS. T. Harold is out, and Marjorie is in the house.

SIR C. Would you have the kindness to let her know I am here?

MRS. T. If I may venture to suggest, I would not see her just directly, Sir Clive.

SIR C. Why not?

MRS. T. She is very much upset at present.

SIR C. Why, what has distressed her?

MRS. T. She must tell you that herself.

SIR C. No, you tell me, Kate, and then, perhaps, I shall know better how to console her. I can't tell you how glad I am to see your face once more. I was thinking of you only this morning.

MRS. T. Thinking of me?

SIR C. And now you of all people can best advise me about Marjorie. She has, doubtless, told you all her story.

MRS. T. Yes, only a few minutes since, and you can imagine my surprise when I learnt to whom she is betrothed.

SIR C. It is about that I wish to speak to you.

MRS. T. Oh, Clive, why ask me for advice? I cannot possibly give you any.

SIR C. No one better, no one better. From what your son, not knowing, of course, who I was, told me, he has formed a serious attachment for Marjorie.

MRS. T. Indeed he has, and that is why she is now so distressed. He spoke of his love to her this morning.

SIR C. And her reply?

MRS. T. Was, of course, a refusal.

SIR C. Um—Do you think she is fond of him?

MRS. T. I fear she is.

SIR C. Why fear? He's a nice looking young fellow. How long has she known him?

MRS. T. Only three months.

SIR C. Three months! Why when I was his age three days were sufficient to make me fall in love with the lady of my choice. You know who she was, Kate?

MRS. T. Indeed, I do.

SIR C. Ah ! well, well. It's no good fretting over the past. So they've known each other three months. I remember he said an accident or something of the kind introduced them. How was it ?

MRS. T. You don't know ? then I'll tell you. One night while we were staying at St. Malo, a fire broke out in an adjacent house. All the inmates save one escaped, and she must have perished had not Harold, in spite of the warnings of the crowd, climbed a ladder, forced his way through the smoke and flames, and succeeded, at the risk of his life, in saving her from a horrible death. That girl was Marjorie Fleming.

SIR C. And this is what he calls rendering a slight service. Why, Kate, he's a hero. He has earned the right to her hand, and, by Jove, he shall have it.

MRS. T. Clive, you have made me happier than I can express.

SIR C. You are deeply attached to the boy ?

MRS. T. Yes, deeply. (*slowly*) To the boy, to the boy !

Enter HAROLD from gate.

HAR. Mother ! (*to SIR CLIVE*) Ah, you've returned, sir.

MRS. T. Harold dear, this gentleman is Sir Clive Cutler, Marjorie's guardian.

SIR C. We've met before this morning.

HAR. I had no idea who you were, sir, or I should have been more discreet in my remarks.

SIR C. Then, perhaps, it's just as well you did not know who I was.

HAR. (*aside*) What can he mean ? (*aloud*) It is curious, sir, I have never heard your name from Miss Fleming, but the little mother has often spoken of you. Indeed, since my father's death !

SIR C. Your father's death. Treherne dead !

HAR. Seven years ago, she has followed every movement of the army in India. She wanted me to go into the service, and I believe would have enlisted as a *vivandière* herself, only we don't indulge in such luxuries.

SIR C. Why didn't you follow her advice ?

HAR. Oh I haven't sufficient dash and energy for a successful soldier. I'm sure I could never face fire.

SIR C. I don't believe you, sir, I don't believe you.

HAR. (*taking MRS. TREHERNE up stage*) Will you pardon me a moment ?

SIR C. Certainly. (*taking out cigar-case*) May I ?

MRS. T. With pleasure.

(SIR CLIVE *lights cigar, sits L., meditating*)

HAR. (*up stage*) Have you seen Marjorie, mother?

MRS. T. Yes, dear; I fear you have been impatient and unkind to her.

HAR. Impatient! I've been a brute; and I'm going to write and ask her to forget what I said. I can't face her till I know she has forgiven me.

MRS. T. I am so glad, dear. A fault acknowledged is a fault atoned.

HAROLD *sits at table and writes*; MRS. TREHERNE *bends over him*.

SIR C. By Jove! Surprises are coming fast and furious. Treherne dead! seven years ago. What a fool I've been! Why, I wasn't forty! However, it's never too late to mend.

MRS. T. (*reading letter*) Yes, dear; you can say nothing better. May I show it to Sir Clive?

HAR. If you like. You have a right to see it, sir. In a moment of passion I used words to Miss Fleming that I now deeply regret, and I have written to beg her forgiveness.

SIR C. (*reading letter*) A very manly letter, Mr. Treherne. I admire you for it. Allow me to add a line.

(*sits at table and writes on the INSIDE page of letter*)

HAR. What do you think he means to do, mother?

MRS. T. Something for your good, I hope, dear.

HAR. Does he know that I —

MRS. T. Hush!

SIR C. (*giving letter to HAROLD*) I don't think she will be long ere she answers this in person. Have it sent to her at once.

(HAROLD *exits into house, R.*)

SIR C. A fine young fellow that, Kate. No wonder Marjorie loves him.

MRS. T. I think women admire bravery more than any other quality in a man.

SIR C. Such bravery as his and deservedly. I couldn't have dared what he did.

MRS. T. Indeed, yet I know of an action that will match it. How did you win the Victoria Cross?

SIR C. Oh, that's another matter altogether, a mere nothing, Kate, a mere nothing.

MRS. T. (*opening book and feigning to read*) Listen. "Among the many gallant acts performed during the engagement Captain Cutler's stands pre-eminent. During the charge of the 15th Colonel Fleming's horse was shot under him and he must have been cut to pieces had not Captain Cutler, himself severely wounded, ridden up and placing the Colonel on his charger said, 'Save yourself, sir, the regiment can't lose its chief.' Then, seizing one of the stirrup-irons, he

urged his horse forward and, absolutely hewing his way through the enemy, succeeded in bringing the Colonel safely into camp." Was that "nothing"?

MRS. TREHERNE *forgets that she is feigning to read, and puts the book down, showing a blank page.*

SIR C. I never saw it so described. Why, Kate, there's nothing there. Do you mean to say you have remembered this?

MRS. T. Why not? Noble actions always live in our memories.

SIR C. Yes, but not word for word.

MRS. T. Word for word if they concern those whom we—we esteem.

SIR C. Clive Cutler, you're the luckiest dog in the world.

Enter MARJORIE from the house.

MAR. Harold! (*sees SIR CLIVE*) Sir Clive, I'm so glad to see you. You never told me you were coming back so soon.

(MRS. TREHERNE *goes to window and calls, "Harold"*)

SIR C. No, my dear, I intended it as a pleasant surprise. (*aside*) It's a shame to tease the poor child.

Enter HAROLD from house.

HAR. Am I forgiven?

MAR. Yes, indeed you are. This letter has made me much happier.

SIR C. Hem! You don't seem to appreciate my part of the epistle.

MAR. Yours, Sir Clive? I didn't see it. (*turns over and reads*) "P.S.—My dearest girl, a little bird has told me all. Don't be unhappy. The man who saved your life should be the man to guard it. I give my full consent, and am waiting to congratulate you.—Your devoted old guardian, CLIVE CUTLER." Oh, Sir Clive, I can't tell you how happy you've made me. Harold dear, now you know to whom I was engaged.

HAR. I hope, sir, you will find me worthy of your trust.

SIR C. I'm sure I shall, my boy. I know all about you. Don't you think you'd better have another bottle of Bass—not champagne, mind you. That's only fit for women and wedding parties.

HAR. Then the sooner I have the occasion to use it the better.

SIR C. Now run away. I have no doubt you're anxious to make up your little difference.

HAR. I must try and persuade Marjorie to forget and forgive, Sir Clive.

MRS. T. I don't think you'll find that very difficult, dear.

SIR C. Nor I!

MAR. Nor I! (MARJORIE and HAROLD go up to back)

SIR C. (*crossing to* MRS. TREHERNE) At all events, Kate, we've made the young people very happy. (music)

MRS. T. Yes, Clive.

SIR C. Precisely. I say we've made *them* very happy.

MRS. T. I hope so, Clive.

SIR C. Why, Kate, you don't seem glad. What are you thinking of? Not of the time when we were their age; eh, Kate?

MRS. T. Indeed I was. Those days seem so long, long ago. We are getting old people now.

SIR C. Old, Kate, nonsense! A woman's as old as she looks, and a man as old as he feels. You don't look a day older in my eyes, and, as for me, I feel like a boy of twenty. Forget that nearly a score of years have slipped away since last we met, and, by Jove, we'll rival the young people in their happiness. What is your answer? (*kisses her hand*) Silence gives consent. (*looks up and sees HAROLD kissing MARJORIE*) Hullo! (*HAROLD and MARJORIE come down*) Well, are the clouds dispersed?

HAR. Yes, Sir Clive, we've settled everything.

SIR C. I thought so, for I saw you seal the bond.

MAR. And you'll come and live with us, Sir Clive, or you'll be so lonely.

SIR C. Thank you, dear, but I don't think I shall. What do you think, Kate?

MRS. T. I hope not, Clive. I hope not sincerely.

MAR. (*kisses MRS. TREHERNE*) Oh, I'm so happy. I don't know which part of my letter has pleased me most.

SIR C. I do; mine.

HAR. At all events, Sir Clive, we shall always have a joke against you.

SIR C. A joke, what is it?

MAR. Yes, I know.

MRS. T. I think I can guess, too.

SIR C. Well, what is it?

MAR. Why, for once in your life you've followed a woman's example, and put the most important part of the letter in "The Postscript."

CURTAIN.

